

## WIPP Quick Facts (As of 4-16-08)

**6,614**

Shipments received since opening

**54,582**

Cubic meters of waste disposed

**100,394**

Containers disposed in the underground

## One Hundred Thousand Nuclear Waste Containers Safely Disposed at WIPP



File photo

The 100,000th container of defense-related TRU waste was safely disposed 2,150-feet underground at WIPP, said Dr. Dave Moody, DOE Carlsbad Field Office manager.

To appreciate the magnitude of this accomplishment, Moody compared the volume of containers now underground at WIPP to an area roughly the size of a football field and five stories high.

"We have a hard working group of people dedicated to protecting the public and the environment," said Moody. "Disposal of 100,000 waste containers demonstrates that our operations are safe and environmentally sound."

The DOE has completed cleanup of legacy TRU waste at 13 sites around the country, resulting in more than 6,500 waste shipments to WIPP. The 100,000th container was received from Idaho National Laboratory on April 6, and disposed underground at WIPP on April 9.

During a news conference with New Mexico reporters, U.S. Senator Pete Domenici weighed in on WIPP's latest milestone. Responding to a question from KSVP reporter Mike Jaxon of Artesia, Domenici reflected on the challenges opening the project and also hailed its success.

In the project's early years, Domenici said there was a lot of commotion, false information and false concern.

"I knew that once WIPP got started that it would work. WIPP is a very successful project," said Domenici. "The world knows about it now."

The WIPP repository's current inventory of permanently disposed waste containers includes 76,312 55-gallon drums, 12,216 100-gallon drums, 7,221 standard waste boxes, 4,508 ten-drum overpacks and 135 RH canisters.

## WIPP Mine Rescue Teams Excel at Regional Competition

WIPP mine rescue teams recently excelled at the 2008 Southwestern Regional Mine Rescue Competition in Carlsbad, N.M. The success of the teams is evidence of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) long-standing commitment to mine safety at WIPP.



"I'm proud of our teams' success and I applaud the members of all of the teams who volunteer to render aid," said Dr. Dave Moody, DOE Carlsbad Field Office manager. "These competitions are not about winning or losing, they're about raising the bar in mine safety."

The two-day competition, which is sponsored by the Southwestern Regional Mine Rescue Association and administered by the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), consists of a field contest, multi-gas instrument contest, benchman's contest and first aid contest. The field contest simulates conditions that could be encountered in an underground mine emergency, including gases, fires or mine instability. Teams are evaluated by MSHA as they move through the obstacle course to locate, treat and move staged victims to the surface.

WIPP's Blue Team captured an overall first place and WIPP's Silver Team took second place in a field that included local teams representing Mosaic Potash and Intrepid Mining, and two teams from Chevron Molycorp of Questa, N.M. WIPP Blue and WIPP Silver teams achieved first and second place, respectively, in the field contest with Mosaic Potash taking third. In the multi-gas instrument contest, Mosaic's James Pierce and Joe Parker took first and second, while WIPP Silver's Matt Ridgeway placed third.

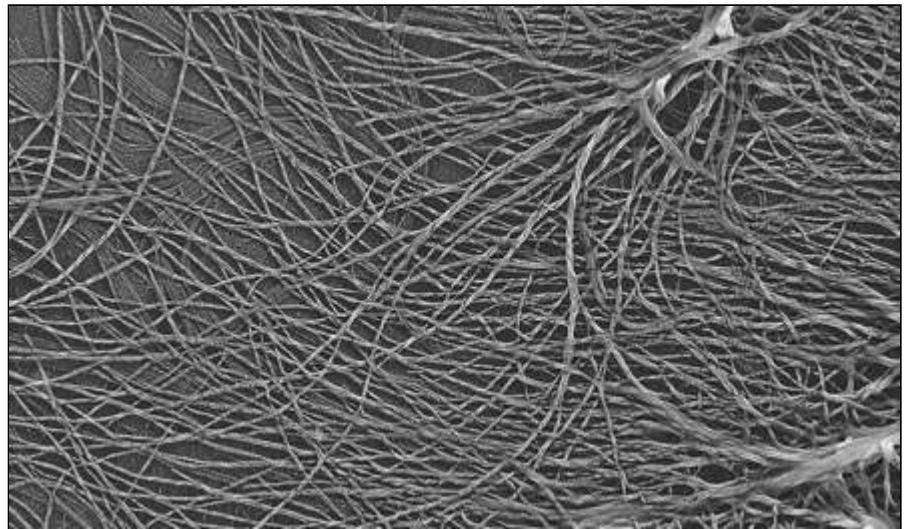


"These individuals are volunteers who have indicated their willingness to help their fellow miner when called upon," says Buddy Webb, WIPP team emergency response coordinator. "We are fortunate to have such a fine group of individuals in the area."

In the benchman's contest, Joe Baca of the WIPP Blue Team took first, with Kevin Cummins of Mosaic taking second and Rudy Dominquez of Intrepid Mining placing third. WIPP Blue Team members Nadine Kuhn, James Pearce and Ty Zimmerly were awarded first place in the first aid contest. Intrepid Mining placed second and Mosaic Potash placed third.

## Does the search for life beyond Earth begin at WIPP?

Finding tiny bubbles in salt samples at WIPP may yield enormous results in the search for extraterrestrial life. A team of researchers, including CBFO Chief Scientist Roger Nelson, has published a paper in the spring 2008 issue of *Astrobiology*, a peer-reviewed journal, announcing the discovery of well preserved cellulose fibers in fluid at WIPP that date back more than 250 million years.



Source: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Web site  
[Cellulose microfibrils](#)

Cellulose, the most common organic compound on earth, is produced by many plants and bacteria. Its discovery in salt deposits at WIPP suggests that cellulose may be an ideal target in the search for life on other planets.

Jack Griffith and Smaranda Willcox, from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, together with Dennis Powers (University of Mississippi), Nelson and Bonnie Baxter (Westminster College) used transmission electron microscopy to analyze the contents of the fluid. They found large numbers of cellulose microfibrils that remained largely intact.

"These cellulose microfibrils represent the oldest native biological macromolecules to have been directly isolated, examined biochemically, and visualized (without growth or replication) to date," write the authors in the paper titled "Discovery of Abundant Cellulose Microfibrils Encased in 250 Ma Permian Halite: A Macromolecular Target in the Search for Life on Other Planets."

In March, NASA reported that the Mars Odyssey orbiter had found evidence of salt deposits on the Red Planet, and that these deposits point to places where water was once abundant and where martian life might have once existed.

"Cellulose appears to be highly stable," says Nelson. "And if it is relatively resistant to harsh conditions such as those found in space, it may provide the ideal "paper trail" in the search for life on other planets."

## 2008 Safety Fair starts next week

Safety is part of the WIPP culture. While safety is the everyday focus of WIPP employees, the annual WIPP Safety Fair offers employees new safety industry information and tips for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. This year's safety fair seeks to raise awareness to a new level and reinforce our commitment to the best safety practices. The fair will span two weeks, starting on April 23 at the site and concluding the following week at the Skeen-Whitlock Building. The theme will be "Safety ... Is it REAL to you?"

Here are some of the activities to watch for:

### **Safety Speaker – Kevin Bailey**

After nearly losing his life in a work-related accident, Kevin suffered immeasurable physical pain and caused emotional pain for his family. In his motivational presentation, Kevin tells his story with power and impact. His presentation emphasizes the importance of safety in the work place, while focusing on job complacency and risk taking. His story will change the way you view safety and conduct of operations.



Kevin Bailey

On April 23, there will be three opportunities to hear this presentation:

- ⌘ 5:00 a.m. in the Guard & Security Building auditorium at the site
- ⌘ 9:30 a.m. in the Guard & Security Building auditorium at the site
- ⌘ 1:30 p.m. at the Skeen-Whitlock Building

### **Forklift Rodeo (site only)**

This new contest to bring focus on forklift safety awareness will be an event you won't want to miss! All qualified personnel may enter—a team consists of a forklift operator and a spotter! Prizes include a trip to the Voluntary Protection Program Participants Association Conference in San Antonio in May, belt buckles for the top three teams and t-shirts for all teams that sign up! To enter, call Justin Kirkes.

### **Department Booths**

Departments at the site will set up booths with safety information, giveaways and prizes on April 23. In-town organizations will set up booths at the Skeen-Whitlock Building on April 30.

## Teachers awarded mini-grants for science/math



WTS President and General Manager Farok Sharif presents mini-grants to Monterrey Elementary School teachers Reita Yoder, Sharon McIntire, Terese Rodriguez, Cathy Roberson, Denice Peterson and Kelli Barta, Monterrey Elementary School principal.

Five Monterrey Elementary School teachers will each receive a \$250 cash award from WTS to promote math and science in the classroom. Two first grade teachers, Cathy Roberson and Denice Peterson, and three second grade teachers, Terese Rodriguez, Sharon McIntire and Reita Yoder, were selected by a WTS review team to receive the "mini-grants."

Washington TRU Solutions initiated the Excellence in Teaching Mini-Grant Program to help educators purchase teaching tools to spark student interest in math and science. Teachers were encouraged to apply for the grants by describing how the funds would benefit students in their math and science classes.

WTS President and General Manager Farok Sharif introduced the program to Eddy County schools in January 2008. "We recognize that math and science are critical skills that young people need as they move toward tomorrow's work force," said Sharif.

## Employees participate in Annual Bataan Memorial Death March



Photo: Norbert Rempe (WTS)

More than 60 years after the atrocities of the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, the sacrifices of American and Filipino soldiers continue to be remembered. On March 30, Norbert Rempe (WTS) and Bill Weston (WRES) participated in the 19th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.



Photo: Norbert Rempe (WTS)

The march honors the men and women who defended Luzon, Corregidor and the harbor defense forts of the Philippines until the bitter end. Many of them were from New Mexico. After surrendering to Japan, the soldiers were forcibly marched 62 miles under the poorest conditions imaginable and spent three years in captivity before being liberated by American forces. Thousands died due to disease, injury, mistreatment and even casual killing by their captors.



Photo: Norbert Rempe (WTS)

[Weston readies for the march before the sun comes up.](#)

The Army ROTC Department at New Mexico State University began sponsoring the memorial march in 1989 to mark a page in history that included so many native sons and affected many families in the state.

Since its inception, the memorial march has grown from about 100 to some 4,000 marchers from across the United States and several foreign countries. While still primarily a military event, many civilians choose to take the challenge.

Memorial marchers could choose between two distances: the full Marathon distance of 26.2 miles or a short 15.2-mile version. Since it was their first experience at the march, Rempe and Weston chose the shorter route, which they finished in less than five hours.

Participants could sign up in military or civilian categories, as individuals or in teams of five. If signed up as a team, all members of the team had to cross the finish line within 20 seconds of each other.

The tie between the end of the war in the Pacific and WIPP did not go unnoticed by Rempe.

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### Interested in WIPP?

If you would like to be notified when TRU TeamWorks is updated with the latest information about WIPP, send an e-mail message to [TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws](mailto:TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws).

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"The war in the Pacific essentially ended with the use of the atomic bomb," he said. "WIPP is now cleaning up defense-related transuranic waste that is a direct result of our nation's nuclear weapons program."

The 20th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March is scheduled for March 29, 2009.

"Can you imagine a WIPP team and a large contingent of individuals from WIPP participating next spring?" asks Rempe. If interested in participating, contact either Rempe or Weston. Both plan to do it again next year.

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The U.S. Department of Energy  
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

Please send comments and/or  
suggestions to: [TRU TeamWorks](mailto:TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws)

